

You Were There

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Summary: AU. Drago is Emperor of the lands and chiefs across the Archipelago vie for the chance to be his successor. Corrupt men are everywhere, innocents are killed, chiefdoms fall, & families are separated. Can Berk and the peaceful Island of Dragons be saved from this madness? This is the story of secrets, betrayal, discovery and true love.

1. Prologue

In this version: 1) Hiccup was not the first to tame a dragon. By the time he was born, it was common knowledge for roughly ten years. 2) Stoick is not a chief, his only purpose is a parent figure for Hiccup 3) Astrid is technically the "heir" because her uncle is the chief of Berk and she is his last relative. 4) There are mentions of other tribes and islands. It's all a mix of the books, films, and tv series. 5) Drago is mentioned but he is not the direct opponent of this story. 6) Basically, forget about everything canon story wise, I'm only using the characters, correctly I hope. () This is rated M because it has some unpleasant material (non-con, character death, infidelity, angst, some gore)

Prologue

The small ones woke up early this day. In particular, the young boys could not contain themselves for it was the day of the execution.

The sun had not yet risen from its slumber when the first three or four of them sidled out of the huts, sneaky as terrible terrors in their yak-fur boots. A layer of fresh snow covered the little village like a new coat of paint, and theirs were the first footprints to blemish its perfect surface. They slithered their way through the huddled wooden huts and dragon posts, through the streets of frozen muck to the silent village center, where the platform stood waiting.

The boys despised everything their elders valued. After all, their Emperor Drago Bludvist was the ultimate idol for the young vikings and only five years have passed since he took the title. Juvenile vikings now scorned beauty and mocked goodness. They would hoot with mirth at the sight of a cripple, and if they saw a wounded forest animal they would bludgeon it to death. They, of course, boasted of injuries and wore their scars with pride, and they reserved special admiration for mutilation: a boy with a missing limb could be the next emperor, a high honor indeed to the current one. It was never argued that they loved violence. The older ones were willing to ride for hours to see bloodshed; and they never missed an execution.

One of the boys climbed on to the base of the platform. Another mounted the head block, put his hands to his throat and slumped while mocking the sounds of an ax chop. The others whooped in admiration. A very young one recklessly began to eat a small piece of bread, and one of the older boys punched his nose and took his breakfast. The young one relieved his feelings by throwing a stone at a terrible terror snoozing on a nearby rooftop, startling it awake. Then there was nothing else to do, so they all squatted on the dry pavement.

Fire light flickered behind the shutters of the substantial wood and stone structures around the square. The color of the sky turned from black to gray. Not long after, the villagers came ducking out of their low doorways, swathed in heavy cloaks of coarse wool, and went shivering down to the nearby river to fetch water.

A group of young men of apprentice age swaggered into the marketplace. They turned the small boys out of their spots with cuffs and kicks, then leaned into the stone arches of dragon feeders, scratching themselves and spitting on the ground. The old women formed a group on the opposite side of the town center, far away from the young hoodlums.

More people flooded the square. Every now and then people would cock their heads, like a wary monstrous nightmare, and glance up at the Grand Hall on the hilltop. Then, at about the time the sun must have started to rise behind the thick gray clouds, the mighty wooden doors opened and a small group came out. The village chief was first, leading a gronckle by foot, followed by a yak cart carrying the bound prisoner. Behind the cart strode three men, and although their faces were covered by hoods, the villagers recognized their chief's second-in-command, the blacksmith, and the High General by their gate and their clothes.

They had all been seen gathered at the hall the day before. The blacksmith had caught the thief red-handed, the general had identified the handcrafted longbow and staff as belonging to the chief's ancestral armory; the thief had been under the temporary shelter of the second-in-command, who had identified the thief as a nomad, a runaway. The chief condemned the fate of death.

While they progressed slowly down the hill, the rest of the village gathered around the recently erected platform. The mood of the crowd was odd. Normally they enjoyed a sentence being carried out on the condemned. It was usually a thief, and they hated thieves, only a little less than traitors. But this thief was different. Nobody knew who she was or where she came from. She had not stolen from them, but

from a sacred building halfway across the island. Not to mention she stole a decorative, ancestral longbow and staff, items whose values were so noted in the village that it would be virtually impossible to sell, unlike a new knife or a good belt, the loss of which would hurt someone. They could not hate a woman for a crime so pointless. There were a few jeers and catcalls as the prisoner entered the heart of the village, but the abuse was half-hearted, and only the small boys mocked her with any enthusiasm.

Most of the village folk had not witnessed the trial since they had to still make a living, so this was the first time they had seen the thief's identity. Some recognized her vaguely, most dubbing her the woman they saw once or twice, maybe a year ago, before suddenly disappearing as fast as she appeared. She was quite young, somewhere between sixteen and twenty years of age, and of slightly above average height. Her skin was smooth and pale, she had a strong tear-drop shaped face and big eyes of emerald green, and her hair was the color of cherry oak, pulled into a tight braid down her back. She was dressed in a yellow tunic with a red sash and a thin, dark cover-up around her waist over dark pants. The young men might have found her appealing if they looked past the grubbiness and dark circles. The old women, however, noticed something of difference; she had a thicker waist than they remember and fuller bust, in which they concluded, with confidence from years of experience, that she had bared a child recently. When the cart rolled past the elderly ladies, their faces reflected one of greatest sympathies, their heads full of prayers for her soul and that of her child's, as well as questions to why the gods led this new mother astray.

The chief and his followers were familiar figures to the community. The second-in-command, named ominously Madguts the Murderous, was a huge fellow who didn't say much but did not often need to get the people to bend to his will. The High General, Alvin, was bulky and intimidating as well; he commands his soldiers with unwavering confidence to compensate for his dull intellect. And last but not least was the local blacksmith. He was old in age but was considered a master of his craft.

A small boy wanted to prove his bravery to his friends and ran up to the approaching cart. With swift movements, he reached into it and yanked hard on the young woman's braid. She turned to him with a snarl on her lips. The incident was not remarkable except that the words she spoke next were not all Norse, the language of the gods. They were a mix of draconic growls, clicks and Norse phrases in a heavy accent that no one could understand. Was there something wrong with her upbringing? Or surely she must be a long way from home? Nobody knew.

The cart halted by the steps to the platform. The chief pulled down the lip of the gate to the cart and climbed on to grab the prisoner. The prisoner started to struggle, much to the boys amusement. The woman's movements were restricted by the ropes tied to her wrists and ankles. Her jerky movements had made manhandling her off the cart and to the platform too difficult so the chief haphazardly flipped her over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes. Her grunt of pain due to landing on her lower stomach was audible to those surrounding the edge of the platform. She was then dumped on shaky legs before the pedestal.

This was the turning point. If she struggled now, or made a move to

escape, she would only die sooner. She was then pushed to her knees and torso secured in place.

There was often a disturbance at this point: whether it be the prisoner's mother screaming, a beloved pulling out a knife, or a call to Odin from the prisoner. The four sentencers prepared themselves for any incident.

It was at that moment when a quiet tune of whistling was heard throughout the square; it started softly and grew to carry across the crowd.

Followed by a voice, a deep one with a heavy accent and a plaintive melody that was of sadness and loss.

_I'll swim and sail on savage seas
>_With ne'er a fear of drowning
>_And gladly ride the waves of life
>_If.. __you will marry me_

The gentle voice cracked on the line.

The prisoner swiveled her head around as soon as the whistling began, desperately searching for the maker. By the third line, both the prisoner and the crowd found the vocalist. Gradually a space formed around the person, and everyone could see him as he kept going.

He was a young man of at least twenty. When people looked at him they wondered why they had not noticed him before. He was a tall lad for his age and almost matched the General in muscle bulk. He had dark red hair and a full beard. But what stood out the most to everyone's eyes was the wee babe in his arms. The old women immediately saw the connection between the stranger, thief and babe. Most of the villagers did not make the same assumption because they were too focused on the man's face, tears leaking from the corner of his eyes.

Until the thief began to sing with him when he drifted off.

_And love me for eternity
>_My dearest one my darling dear
>_Your mighty words astound me
>_But I've no need of mighty deeds
>_When I feel your arms around me_

The prisoner's face expressed utter devastation and yet happiness as she looked upon the strange man and small infant. As they carried on the slow, haunting tune, the gruff general nudged the chief who was holding the ax, but he took no notice. He let the thief carry on singing. The square was frozen while the battered woman and her lover held death at bay.

_I only want you near me
>_To love to kiss to sweetly hold
>_For the dancing and the dreaming
>_Through all life's sorrows and delights
>_I'll keep your laugh inside me
>_I'll swim and sail on savage seas
>_With ne'er a fear of drowning
>_And gladly ride the waves of life

>_If you will marry me_

The voices ended surprising strong for such a sad and bittersweet moment between two bonded souls. The eyes of the two never drifted too far from the other. The woman soaked in as much as she could of the two best things that ever entered her life.

Even the young boys had no reaction to such a display.

In the next moment the chief handed the ax over to the General who did not hesitate in his intended action. The motion was smooth and quick, effective.

Before anyone could absorb the fact that it was all over, a feminine scream was heard and a loud thud. Everyone looked to the source and found a large hammer embedded in the platform, inches from where the chief stood. All heads turned to the large stranger who began to speak clear and loud, with deliberate timing in his words and eyes roving the three men beside the chief: "I damn you with sickness and sorrow, with hunger and pain; your house shall be consumed by fire, and your children shall die dishonorably; your enemies shall prosper, and you shall grow old in sadness and regret, and die in foulness and agonyâ€|" At the end of his words he brought his free hand up to his mouth to create a sharp whistle that was almost immediately reciprocated by an incoming roar. Around the shingled roof tops came a large, deep blue Thunderdrum that quickly scooped down and allowed the stranger to hop on his saddle. The General saw what his next intentions were but acted too late and before anyone knew it, all four men were flat on their backs in the dirt.

The strange man took off on the back of that Thunderdrum and was never seen again by the villagers. Over time, everyone present that day forgot about the unusualness of that day. They easily put it all behind them.

All except the four men of the sentencing, whose lives changed permanently that day.

2. 12 years later

Thank you so much for the reviews! I loved the feedback. I'm sorry it takes me so long but I like my long chapters. And just if you were wondering, the prologue was not on Berk. Neither is this chapter; Berk will come up later on. (Remember, this is an AU.)

>Ps. If you want to know what I'm basing my geography and Island names on, go to the How to Train Your Dragon's Wiki page on the Barbaric Archipelago and check out it's map.<p>

Chapter 1: The Belchers

12 YEARS LATER

In a small valley, at the foot of a sloping hillside, located on a peninsula of Berserk Island, Gobber the Belch was heating a metal rod.

The hammer, in place of his missing left hand, was pounding on the end of it when he brought it over to the anvil. The apprentice working steadily in the corner could be heard polishing and sharpening

swords with a _scrape, scuff_ and then _clunk_ as it dropped in a barrel of other metal weapons. There was also one more young worker outside the smithery, occupied with placing the new armor on the customer's dragon.

The apprentice was fourteen years old and short for his age but compensated for his height with bulging biceps and wide shoulders. His name was Snotlout and he had a head of dark hair and obnoxious eyebrows. Unlike him, the other two in attendance had blond hair. The one working silently outdoors was called Fishlegs. Everything about him was large, from his face to his stature and even his heart. He might seem intimidating from a distance, but he was the softest and most knowledgeable viking his age. The blacksmith, Gobber the Belch, was a husky man with quite an unpleasant appearance but people close to him would say that his demeanor more than makes up for it. He moved around the small hut with _thud, clunk_ due to his metal prosthetic on his right leg, at the end of his stump.

Vikings across the archipelago shared the scars the blacksmith owned. They all said to one another that it's an occupational hazard, dealing with dragons the way they do. Not even twenty years previously, under the guidance of their all-powerful ruler, villages everywhere were able to weaponize the dragons they captured. As to be expected, not long after, battles broke out; between tribes, nests of uncaptured dragons, and even dragon sympathizers. The consequences of such grander than when dragons raided on a weekly basis. Emperor Drago Bludvist then used his own army of dragon riders to keep the islands under his control, especially to ensure that none build an army larger than his own. An army rumored to be so vast and powerful that Drago had intentions to expand his empire through the Roman lands.

Gobber was the only person the two boys had left, both of their fathers were taken out by a Bludvist soldier and then their homes plundered. The now adolescents found solace with the town blacksmith, a man whose family was taken from him many years ago, and began to work for him. Only Snotlout took up the position of apprentice, Fishlegs did not mind helping during times of demand but he knew the life of a blacksmith was not for him. The two young vikings had been under the wing of the man for nearly five winters and now that they were becoming men, Gobber wished that at least his apprentice would take a more intelligent interest in his work, for he had a lot to learn if he was to be a master of his craft. So far Snotlout remained bored and baffled by the principles of metal work.

When Gobber's project was finished it would be the most brilliant gadget to come out of his shop yet. It had a square base with four wheels and a thick circular disk in the center. Bolted to it were two thick beams situated vertically five feet. When all said and done, it would be a catapult of sorts, designed like a bow and arrow but handled.

Gobber was making the support rods that ran across the beams. With his eye on the sketch made by Fishlegs, Gobber turned the rod completely over and tapped it with the big head of his hammer. A few _clank_s later resulted one end tapered. He did it again to the other end.

It was not often that Gobber could dawdle in works not intended for armor or sharp weapons. He found consolation in bringing Fishlegs's

ideas, especially since the good ones are few and far between, to fruition. The one he worked on last, maybe a year before, was a calling horn of gigantic size, used currently as a warning system for the little village.

He glanced up from his anvil and saw Great Mother Gothi, the town elder. She was the last of the Dragon Heart generation; she was a small, tempered old gal with a pallid exterior, long walking stick, and no teeth. Gobber had been her caretaker the past three winters since only he had seen the value her life and knowledge was to others, not to mention only a few could translate her drawings, one of which was himself. She was standing in the doorway, holding a basket of food. It must be midday, he thought. Gothi gathered the towering men around her and passed out what she brought them, in silence. They then all sat together, close to outer walls yet near enough to the fires to continue to feel the warmth of the forge, and chewed on the stale wheat bread and tough, dried meat. Gobber watched the villagers through the gap in the wall, most walked with slow gates, most likely to enjoy the warming summer weather. Not one said a word to another; the vikings kept their eyes and backs straight and did not dally from their intended task. A normal day if there ever was one, he guessed. After all, Gobber has only been the attending blacksmith for this village for a few short years, before that he made a living in a village farther up the huge island, where he found Snotlout and Fishlegs.

Gobber viewed it all differently though; he did not dwell on the thought but he remembered a time when vikings were so much more: they were social, they were united, they were free. Gobber let it go because he knew there was no good reason to hold on to the past, not when you needed to put everything you had into the present, especially when there were three persons to keep an eye on.

The hefty viking continued to gnaw on his tough meat; he had some difficulty when his stubborn false tooth wiggled loose. He used his tongue to guide it back in place and knocked it down with his false hand. Just as he was about to take his last bite, he heard a horn blare. He cocked his head to listen. The sound was coming from the watchtower, it was his horn. He walked outside, intending to investigate the cause for alarm.

A moment later, a burly, masked viking with a fully braided beard approached and announced to the people gathered, "Your chief is coming."

Gobber stepped closer. "You mean Madguts?" Madguts, also known as Madguts the Murderous, was the most notorious chief on the spacious island. He ruled this valley, and took over many others around it, in less than the span of a decade. His dwelling was a grand one located a few hills away.

The disguised man responded, "No, his adopted son and heir, Dagur."

"Dagur the Deranged?" Everyone on the island has heard the name before, most wish they had not. The most recent rumor was not of his deeds as a deranged man with power but of the fact that he was betrothed to the heiress of Berk, Astrid Hofferson.

"The same," said the Viking. "And in a rage."

Gobber's heart sank. At the best of times it could be difficult to deal with the future chief, but the young viking in a rage was impossible. "What's he so angry about?"

"His bride rejected him."

"Fearless Finn Hofferson's neice?" said Gobber in surprise. He felt a twing of fear. The marriage was going to improve the way of life here. Berk was to be an ally and Dagur was to hopefully be under more control. "I thought it was settled."

"So did we allâ€"except the girl, it seems," the man said. "The moment she met him, she punched his face and announced that she would not marry him for all the world and an ax."

Gobber's unified brow furrowed deeper. This meant bad news; really bad news was coming. He spoke up again, pulling at straws. "But the lad's not bad-looking, as I recall."

An opinionated woman standing in the crowd spoke up: "As if that made any difference, in her position. If all chiefs' female heirs were allowed to marry whom they please, we would all be ruled by strolling minstrels and dark-eyed outlaws."

"She may yet change her mind," muttered Fishlegs hopefully.

"She will if her mother takes a birch rod to her," the woman said with a sneer.

The masked viking contradicted, "Her mother is dead, and so is her father."

The woman nodded, as if it proved her correct. "That explains why she doesn't know the facts of life. But I don't see why her uncle cannot compel her."

The stranger answered, "It seems he once promised he would never marry her to someone she hated." He continued, "She is his last relative, the last pure blood Hofferson. If she was not to take over for her uncle, his two bastard children would share it, which is something no one wants."

"'Tis a foolish pledge," Gobber said with resentment. How could a powerful man tie himself to the whim of a girl in that way? The future of Berk rested on her and the decisions made now and until he dies. Her marriage could affect military alliances, finances,â€| lives.

"Chief Hofferson is an unbending man," pointed out the stranger. "He won't go back on a promise, even one made to a child." He shrugged his metal lined shoulders. "So they say."

Snotlout spoke up in a slightly cracked, adolescent voice. "By Thor, I think that's him." Following his gaze, they all looked across the huts to the rolling hills farther up land. A dragon was flying low, kicking up clouds of dust and leaves. Snotlout's oath was prompted by the dragon itself. It was a skrill, rarely captured anymore and this one was massive. Gobber narrowed his eyes against the sun and gazed across the pasture. The skrill had its head down so the spikes lined

across the back of its head were visible. The man riding it was covered in armor and leather, undistinguishable.

As he closed in on the village, men began herding their wives with small children inside their homes, telling them to lock the door. Within a matter of minutes, the young heir and skryll was upon them. The dragon and its rider glided into the square without a reduction in speed causing some vikings to be knocked to the ground, others tossed into the air. The rider eventually stopped the dragon in mid air, opened its wings wide, to intimidate the people more, before he touched down. Gobber felt a surge of fury at the recklessness of the stupid youth on his immense dragon. The beast then tossed its head and bucked but Dagur stayed on, kicking its side in retaliation.

The young viking was a tall, well-built fellow close to twenty years, with bright red hair hidden by a horned helmet and a blue face tattoo across the left side of his face. His nose was long and showed signs of multiple fractures. He was garbed impressively with spikes, studs, wrappings and even a belt with a pictorial of his mount. He looked around at the assembled vikings. "Who shall speak to me on the behalf of the village?" he said.

There was a tension filled pause in the square. Gobber stepped forward. "I. I'm the blacksmith," he said tightly. "The name's Gobber."

"This village no longer exists," said Dagur promptly. "My father, _your chief_, gave this dank little place to me as a wedding gift. I refuse to give it back and, yet, I despise the idea of it so I am burning this place down. Now, get everyone to leave."

Gobber had been dreading this, only something brash and disastrous could come out of Dagur's mouth, especially when he is in one of his fits. But he held on to the hope that Dagur only acted on impulse and might be persuaded to change his mind. With great effort, he made his voice causal and friendly. "But so many families live 'ere. You wouldn't want them to be without a home, would ya? After all, this village provides your family income."

Dagur immediately scowled at the blacksmith. With a snarl he said, "Don't tell me how to manage my affairs, laborer. Now leave, before you can't." With that he pulled out his double sided ax from the sheath on his back.

Snotlout opened his mouth to say something in outrage, the same as Gobber, but little Gothi stepped in front and quickly expressed, "Be quiet, or he'll take your head off," in the dirt, in front of Gobber. There was dead silence. The other vikings of the village stood as still as statues, watching.

"Will you at least let us pack our belongings?" Gobber asked through eyes of hatred.

The only response he got was a sneer, "If you pathetic creatures are not gone from this place by sundown tomorrow, I'm burning you with it." But then his eyes rolled back into his head as he leaned back and gave a mighty laugh that lasted an uncomfortable amount of time. "_Mwahahahahaha._" He leaned forward in his saddle and continued, "_Actually that sounds delightful, so please, by all means, take as long as you need to pack._" And with that, he took off

into the sky, sending some people back to the ground with the strong gust of the skrill's mighty wings.

Gobber turned back to the forge. Next to Fishlegs stood Gothi, and Snotlout was by the doorway. And with sad eyes Fishlegs looked up and asked, "What do we do now?"

â€|

Sorry about all that, I'm just trying to set up some characters. And don't worry, our favorite Berkian will show up in the next chapter. But keep in mind: he (and all the characters) will be a little different because the events in canon did not happen to them. +I would love to hear your thoughts.

End
file.